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Concern on CIA Manual Is Dismissed by Reagan

'Much Ado About Nothing,' President Says

Associated Press

President Reagan yesterday dismissed concern about the CIA's controversial manual for Nicaraguan rebels as "much ado about nothing," but intelligence sources said an internal Central Intelligence Agency investigative report recommends disciplining personnel involved in its production.

At a post-election news conference in Los Angeles, Reagan said he had not seen the CIA inspector general's findings or another report by the President's Intelligence Oversight Board, whose three members he appoints.

But he added: "I have to say from whatever advance information I have that there was much ado about nothing, that it is not a document that is teaching someone how to assassinate. There's nothing of that kind in it."

The 90-page manual, entitled "Psychological Operations in Guerrilla War," was prepared by CIA officials a year ago for rebels, known as "contras," fighting Nicaragua's leftist government. Its existence was reported three weeks ago by The Associated Press.

The manual suggests the "selective use of violence" to "neutralize" Nicaraguan officials; the hiring of professional criminals for "selective jobs"; arranging for the death of a

rebel supporter to create a "martyr" for the cause, and coercing Nicaraguans into carrying out rebel assignments.

While the word "assassinate" is not used in the manual, the section on "neutralizing" refers to assessing the level of violence that might be needed to remove an unpopular government official.

The CIA and the oversight board investigations—as well as inquiries by congressional oversight committees—have focused on whether the instructions violate presidential orders barring U.S. involvement in assassinations.

After the existence of the manual was disclosed, the CIA urged rebels to ignore all its recommendations and began trying to recall copies of the document.

Intelligence sources, who insisted on anonymity, said the CIA report does recommend discipline of agency personnel involved, but they refused to provide details.

Nicaragua's Sandinista government has charged that rebel forces have murdered 854 civilians since fighting began in 1981, and two weeks ago, Edgar Chamorro, propaganda chief of the CIA-backed Nicaraguan Democratic Force, said it was the rebels' "practice" to execute captured government officials deemed "criminals"—an assertion other rebel leaders denied.